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ABSTRACT

In June 1983, the Colorado State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education (SBCCOE) appointed a sub-committee on the Quality of Education to consider the recommendations of recent national and state-level reports on the status of education. The sub-committee identified a number of issues relative to the quality of public education. This report identifies and discusses these issues, focusing on concerns related to: (1) curriculum and standards, and the negative consequences of returning to a classical, monolithic curriculum; (2) steps undertaken in Colorado to ensure the quality of vocational education programs; (3) the responsibility of public secondary education to prepare students for the world of work; and (4) high school/community college cooperation in areas such as advanced placement, early admissions programs, and high school fast-track programs. The next sections of the sub-committee's report identify issues that have yet to be resolved and suggest a series of steps for further action. Appendices provide the SBCCOE staff paper, "The Philosophy and Principles of Vocational Education"; the SBCCOE position paper on high school/community college cooperation; and a paper, "'A Nation at Risk'--The Forgotten Majority," prepared by the State Advisory Council for Vocational Education that criticizes the report by the National Commission on Excellence in Education for ignoring vocational education in the call for education reform. (LAL)

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ISSUES RELATED TO THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

A

PRELIMINARY REPORT

OF THE

COLORADO STATE BOARD

FOR

COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND OCCUPATIONAL EDUCATION

PREPARED BY THE

SBCCOE

SUB-COMMITTEE ON QUALITY EDUCATION

ELINOR GREENBERG, Ed.D., CHAIR

JC 860 089

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MAY 1984

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SUMMARY MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 19, 1984

TO: Colleagues in Education

FROM: Colorado State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education Sub-Committee on Quality Education.

SUBJECT: State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education Report — Issues Related to the Quality of Education

In June, 1983, the State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education (SBCCOE) appointed a sub-committee on the Quality of Education consisting of three board members and four staff members. The purpose of the sub-committee was to consider the recommendations of recent national and state level reports on the status of education.

In February, 1984, the SBCCOE adopted the first report of the sub-committee, entitled, "Issues Related to the Quality of Education." The SBCCOE staff prepared a number of position papers on the following topics:

— The Philosophy of Vocational Education (Appendix I)

— High School/Community College Cooperation (Appendix II)

— A paper was also prepared by the State Advisory Council for Vocational Education (SACVE), "A Nation at Risk — The Forgotten Majority" (Appendix III).

These reports and papers address a number of issues relative to the quality of public education that are of vital concern to the SBCCOE. They also respond to many of the recommendations made by other reports that are currently under consideration by local school districts, educational institutions and governing boards.

The SBCCOE recognizes that the decisions you will be making in the coming months are likely to impact on all the citizens of Colorado and on the quality of education in our state for decades to come. We, therefore, request that you carefully review the issues, concerns and recommendations contained in the enclosed materials and that you thoughtfully address the questions that we have raised.

The SBCCOE would welcome an opportunity to discuss these matters with you. We stand ready to respond to any questions you may have and would appreciate receiving your comments. Please contact Len Hergenreter, Director of Vocational Education, SBCCOE, at 866-3071 or T. J. Thurow-Hankerson, External Affairs Liaison, SBCCOE at 866-3162.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

May, 1984

STATE BOARD FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND OCCUPATIONAL EDUCATION

Issues Related to the Quality of Education

Curriculum and Standards:

The Return to a Classical, Monolithic Curriculum:

The State Board for Community Colleges (SBCCOE) is concerned that proposed, uniform state-wide graduation requirements will narrow the options available to an increasingly diverse student population and may adversely effect the majority of Colorado students who do not plan to enter college immediately after high school, but do plan to seek employment. Recent research findings support diversity in curricular content and methodology and argue against a "return to a classical, monolithic curriculum" for all learners. High standards and quality education for *all* Coloradans must therefore, include appropriate opportunities for *all* students to participate and to reach their highest potential.

Vocational Education:

Success in the workplace depends on certain generic competencies being achieved by *all* learners. Vocational education seeks to provide for the achievement of these competencies, as well as to foster high standards of excellence in programs designed to prepare students for entry-level employment.

The World of Work:

All students should be prepared to enter the world of work by public school preparation in five major categories. Education should extend beyond the walls of the classroom and opportunities for field-based, workplace learning should be extended to all students.

Advanced Placement — Community Colleges and Area Vocational Schools:

The SBCCOE has adopted a resolution on high school/community college cooperation (Appendix II). Colorado's community colleges and area vocational schools can play significant roles in both remedial and enrichment education through developing cooperative arrangements with high schools.

Issues yet to be Resolved:

Eleven fundamental questions are raised for discussion and consideration.

Next Steps:

Four recommendations for further action are made.

Introduction

At its June 1983 meeting, the State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education (SBCCOE) appointed a Sub-Committee on Quality Education to assist the Board in preparing a response to recent national education reports. This response was intended to be shared with the Members of local school boards, educators, business and community leaders and parents who are concerned about the quality of public education. During the Fall of 1983, the Board also expressed interest in responding to the Task Force recommendations that have resulted from the State Board of Education's "Operation Renaissance" project.

This preliminary paper is intended to identify a number of issues of concern to the SBCCOE, relative to the quality of public education.

Curriculum and Standards: The Return to a Classical, Monolithic Curriculum

Some national reports and a number of the State Board of Education's Task Force recommendations seem to advocate an increasingly monolithic education system. Serious questions need to be raised about whether or not this is a desirable direction for the future. Because of the advances in educational practice and extensive research findings in education in recent decades, especially in the areas of curriculum, human development and learning, it seems inappropriate to move in a singular educational direction. Given the increased diversity of the learner population as well as increasingly diverse employment needs in the future, correspondent diversity in high school graduation requirements would be a more appropriate direction than the return to a classical, monolithic curriculum.

For example, recent research on learning shows that individuals have various dominant learning styles. People move through the learning cycle from practical, concrete experience to reflection and observation to abstraction and generalization to new applications. Each learner has a dominant way of learning, reflected on this cycle and is in a different place at a different time in this cycle.

These individual differences in learning style should be reflected in curriculum design, if the quality of learning is to improve. The SBCCOE does not support lower standards, expectations or limited outcomes. But different ways to achieve agreed-upon results, e.g., curriculum options should be available to all high school students. This is especially true for those youth who may not currently be college bound, but who prefer to enter the work force following high school graduation. In addition, opportunities for students to change their minds about educational and career goals as they mature intellectually need to be provided in any future quality education system. Therefore, a single, classical curriculum is neither appropriate in terms of human development, quality curriculum design nor future societal needs.

SBCCOE Position on Vocational Education

The SBCCOE recognizes the importance of quality academic programs which balance and interact with effective vocational programs. The SBCCOE knows that success in the workplace for everyone is dependent upon such competencies as: communication skills, the ability to think critically and independently, civic literacy, understanding of others, the capacity to apply mathematics and an understanding of the scientific principles that underlie the basic technologies of our times.

The SBCCOE supports academic excellence and, in addition, believes that vocational education is an essential and integral part of a quality comprehensive high school curriculum. The SBCCOE has adopted a Statement of Philosophy on Vocational Education which sets

forth the principles upon which a rigorous education is both possible and desirable for students whose needs are met best through vocational education programs.

The SBCCOE's Division of Occupational Education is required by law to continuously promote quality vocational education programs. The Division has initiated a number of specific projects that are designed to foster quality vocational education. For example, the Division is:

1) developing criteria for designating High Technology Training Centers and Business Centers. 2) it is reviewing the current quality standards for vocational programs and is examining the credentialing requirements for vocational instructors. 3) In cooperation with Colorado State University (CSU) and the University of Northern Colorado (UNC), the Division is now exploring ways to promote microcomputer instruction in vocational classrooms and is developing a software lending library. 4) In addition, the Division is reviewing teacher education programs at CSU and the UNC to ensure that they meet the needs of pre-service and in-service teachers and school districts. 5) The Division works regularly with program advisory committees in order to ensure input by business and industry and is improving its interagency communications.

These are a few examples of ways in which the quality of vocational programs is being enhanced and assured. It is the position of the SBCCOE that both quality academic programs and quality vocational programs are necessary to meet diverse student needs and goals. What is needed now is to explore ways in which the generic, common goals of both curricula can be identified and to provide diverse curricular paths to these desirable learning outcomes.

Responsibility for Preparing Students for the World of Work

The SBCCOE believes that preparing all students for the world of work is a basic responsibility of the public secondary education system. Such a preparation should include: (1) mastery of the basic, generic educational skills, (2) exposure to a variety of occupations, (3) mastery of a specific occupational skill, (4) the adoption of appropriate work habits, and (5) the encouragement of student participation in a well supervised workplace educational experience which is closely related to school studies. These responsibilities must be met in the educational system.

In addition, vocational education programs offer students opportunities to participate in leadership organizations which play a major role in accomplishing these competencies.

In preparing students for the world of work, education should not be confined within the walls of the classroom. The SBCCOE believes that all secondary students should have opportunities for workplace education through both classroom and field-based learning experiences and proposes that joint efforts be explored to increase cooperation between CDE and SBCCOE in this area.

Advanced Placement

Providing *remedial and enrichment education* is one role, among many, that our community college system and area vocational schools in Colorado can and do now play. With this role in mind, the SBCCOE has adopted a resolution on high school/community college cooperation (see page 10). The resolution addresses such issues as: 1) high school fast-track programs; 2) early admission programs/advanced placement; and 3) further initiatives for high school/community college cooperation.

In addition, community colleges, area vocational schools can and do play a major role in assisting many *gifted, talented* and exceptional students. The competency-based curriculum in vocational education programs provide important opportunities for many more gifted and talented and exceptional students to remain interested in school and achieve their highest potential. It is suggested that efforts be made to explore and expand these institutions' role in enhancing the quality of secondary education in the areas of both remedial and enrichment education.

Issues Yet to be Resolved

The SBCCOE is vitally concerned that the State Board of Education and all parties interested in this discussion of educational issues address a number of additional questions in reviewing the CDE Task Force recommendations. Some of these questions are as follows:

1. What are the *purposes* of secondary schools? Are they solely to prepare students for college? Are Americans to abandon the belief that the secondary school is a place to prepare youth for several life-roles, only one of which is the role of college student? Is preparation for the world of work also a priority for secondary schools?

2. What should be the nature of the secondary school *curriculum?* Is it wise to adopt school board policies or enact state legislation that will mandate using all of the available time in the secondary school to meet the requirements of a classical, monolithic curriculum? Is student choice also a priority? Does student diversity demand curricular diversity?

3. *Who* should be educated in the American high school? If the proposed singular, classical curriculum replaces the concept of a comprehensive curriculum, will this not result in excluding many more youth from the secondary school than we do now? Will this direction not increase the size of the growing underclass in America? How do we address the likely increase in the drop-out rate, which can be anticipated by adopting the proposed mandatory curriculum?

4. What methods of structuring the *learning process* are best for diverse learners? Are we to ignore what we know about the differences in the way that people learn? Are we to deny an education suited to their needs to those who learn best by moving from the practical to the abstract? Should we only teach to those who learn best from abstraction? Where is the proper role of experience in the curriculum?

5. On what basis should we judge the *success* of the secondary school? Is success solely a matter of how many students go on to college right after high school? Or should we also consider the school's "holding power" and its effectiveness in preparing students for several next-steps and varied life-roles?

6. Is there a need for all Colorado K-12 students to be exposed to *workplace education* concepts and survival skills for living in our modern society? If the answer is "yes" to this question, should the SBCCOE expand its mission, working in conjunction with the State Board of Education and the Colorado Department of Education, to integrate survival skills, employability skills and workplace education into secondary general education programs for all students?

7. Do we want *separate secondary schools* for individuals who want and need curriculum options that are different from the classical model? Are we to abandon the offerings and potential of vocational education as part of the mainstream of the Colorado education system?

8. Should the primary purpose of the *Colorado Vocational Act* be to provide Colorado students with specific skills training to develop entry level employment skills? Should more basic academic skills and competencies be incorporated into vocational programs?

9. Should Colorado consider required *competency-based examinations* before students enter high school and/or before they graduate from high school?

9. Is the mix of delivery systems that includes comprehensive high schools, area vocational schools and community colleges the preferred approach to providing vocational/technical training to Colorado citizens? Are there ways in which collaboration between these delivery systems can be increased and improved?

10. Should the *basic academic skills* (reading, writing, mathematics, etc.) be mastered by all Colorado students at the elementary level of instruction?

11. Is public policy now adequate to provide for *recurrent, lifelong education* for adults? Is there duplication of adult programs now offered at high schools, community colleges and area vocational schools? Do these adult programs serve different populations? Should there be more cooperative efforts between high schools and postsecondary institutions to serve adult learners?

NEXT STEPS

1. The SBCCOE requests that local school boards, the Governor's Task Force on Excellence in Education, the State Board of Education and all interested parties carefully analyze any recommendations on improving the quality of education in light of the concerns and questions raised in this report. It is important that decisive action to advance the quality of education in Colorado be taken, but we caution that hasty action may prove unwise in the long run.

2. The SBCCOE requests that all those interested in this discussion of educational issues consider the issues presented by the State Advisory Council for Vocational Education (SACVE) in the paper entitled, "A Nation at Risk — The Forgotten Majority" (see page 11).

3. The SBCCOE requests that local school boards, the Governor's Task Force, State Board of Education and all interested parties join in supporting increased high school/community college cooperation and jointly explore new avenues to expand these relationships.

4. The SBCCOE has requested that the State Board of Education join with it in an effort to specifically address the questions raised in this report through the formation of a combined task force.

Appendix I

The Philosophy and Principles of Vocational Education

A. Vocational education is an integral part of the total educational program.

B. Vocational education should be made available to all persons in all communities and be provided on whatever levels and in whatever types of institutions which will most effectively and efficiently serve the total citizenry.

C. Vocational education shall be flexible to keep pace with the interests and needs of individuals and the labor market.

D. Functioning representative advisory commmittes shall be utilized to give assistance to those persons having responsibility for vocational education programs.

E. The public should receive continuing and accurate information on the goals, objectives, and accomplishments of vocational education.

F. Students admitted to an approved vocational program must have a related occupational objective and be able to benefit from participation in the program.

G. The equipment used in vocational education programs should be comparable to the type used in each occupation.

H. Vocational education programs should strive to duplicate the actual work environment in the occupation.

I. The job analysis approach to instruction in vocational education should be used to develop a systematic and realistic approach to the vocational education curriculum.

J. Vocational education instruction should be characterized by teaching methods stressing a "learning-by-doing" philosophy.

K. Each vocational program should be designed to provide a minimum level of competency a student must attain in order to successfully complete the program.

L. The instructional program should be directed to the level of the students, with individized instruction for those outside the majority range.

M. Vocational education for adults should provide training, retraining or upgrading for useful or gainful employment.

N. Vocational guidance personnel should possess an experience in the world of work.

O. The dignity of work should be emphasized in all aspects of vocational education.

P. Research contributing to or affecting vocational education should be planned, conducted and analyzed under the auspices of persons knowledgeable of vocational education.

Q. The State Plan is the instrument through which vocational education federal funds are obtained and programs are defined, structured and administered.

R. The total process of vocational education must include responsibility for student placement and follow-up.

S. Vocational student orangizations should supplement instruction, be an integrated facet of the total program, provide an opportunity to develop leadership, cooperation and citizenship.

T. Vocational education instructors must possess the occupational skills, knowledge and competencies sufficient to provide effective instruction.

U. Vocational education programs and objectives should be periodically and continuously evaluated by persons directly concerned with the program.

V. School administrators should have an understanding of, appreciation for, and a commitment to support vocational education.

W. Vocational education should be coordinated with the activities of other agencies concerned with occupational training.

X. Vocational education personnel must be provided opportunities for professional growth and improvement.

Appendix II

POSITION PAPER ON HIGH SCHOOL/COMMUNITY COLLEGE COOPERATION

Purpose: This paper, which was developed for the State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education's Subcommittee on Quality, outlines current high school/community college cooperative efforts, and suggests additional ways in which the community colleges can improve the educational quality of high school programs.

Colorado's 13 public community and junior colleges are in an excellent position to assist local high school districts to offer enriched programs for talented students, and to assist in remedial and developmental programs for less academically talented students.

Early Admissions Programs/Advanced Placement. In areas of the state served by community colleges, students in the high school junior and senior year can enroll in community college courses. Through cooperative arrangements between the high school and the college, students can take community college courses for college credit; students who have completed high school requirements can also be admitted to the community college as regular students, thus getting a head start on their college work. These courses are taken in addition to the student's regular high school course work.

Such cooperative arrangements provide the student with the opportunity to take courses for enrichment purposes, which might not be available as a part of the regular high school curriculum. Students are discouraged from dropping out of high school to enter the college program, and careful accounting is maintained to avoid double funding of the student at the high school and the community college.

High School "Fast Track" Program. The "Fast Track" Program was established by Legislative Act in 1981, and provides many of the features of the Early Admission program, except that provision is made for the student's tuition to be paid by the high school district.

Because of the inability of many local school districts to provide funding for tuition, only a very limited number of students have been enrolled in community colleges under this particular program.

Community Colleges As Area Vocational Schools. Each State System and Local District community college has been designated as an Area Vocational School, serving both secondary and postsecondary students. Most operate under contract with local school districts to provide specialized vocational education programs which might not otherwise be economically or educationally viable for an individual high school. These programs provide high school credit, and are partially funded through the Colorado Vocational Act.

Further Initiatives for High School/Community College Cooperation. A recnt report by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, "High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America," calls for ". . . a comprehensive partnership with one or more secondary schools" by institutions of higher education. Some specific areas where such cooperative arrangements might be developed include the following:

1. Identify gifted students in the early high school grades, and provide them with the opportunity to take college level courses.

2. Offer community college courses, for college credit, on the high school campuses.

3. To assist academically disadvantaged students, provide for high school courses on the college campus, including access to counseling, remedial, and developmental programs and services which are available at most community colleges.

4. Allow students to take courses for both high school and college credit. This recommendation will require legislative authorization to resolve the funding issue.

5. Provide cooperative in-service opportunities for high school faculty members through community college courses. Current State Board of Education procedures permit courses taken at community colleges to be counted towards recredentialing requirements of public school teachers. Additional opportunities could be made available for joint in-service programs for both high school and college faculties.

Appendix III

A NATION AT RISK — THE FORGOTTEN MAJORITY

The recent report entitled, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform,* published by the National Commission on Excellence in Education has caused much discussion in the educational community and the general public The members of the National Commisson on Excellence in Education and the author of the report established the groundwork for a full scale commentary on education in America. It is apparent from the report and the credentials of the Commission membership that the report deals solely with the needs of the 20 percent of the youth who will successfully pursue a four year baccalaureate degree. It is imperative that educational institutions address the needs of the other 80 percent youth.

This paper entitled, "A Nation at Risk — The Forgotten Majority", a response concerning the report, *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform,* is dedicated to the 80 percent of the people in this nation whose needs were not adequately addressed in the *Nation at Risk* report.

Vocational education must be a component of the secondary school program. Educators, government officials, legislators and the lay public support this thesis.

— 1917 Federal Smith-Hughes Act established vocational education as a component part of the secondary school system.

— 1918, "Seven Cardinal Principles of Education" called for saleable skills for high school graduates.

— 1938, 1946, 1958, Educational Policies Commissions reports supported vocational education for secondary students.

— 1947, "Ten Imperative Needs of Youth" published by the National Association of Secondary Principals declared, "All youth need to develop saleable skills and those understandings and attitudes that make the worker an intelligent and productive participant in economic life.

— 1967, Referring to the need for career and vocational education, Sidney P. Marland, Jr., U.S. Commissioner of Education, stated, "Shall we persevere in the traditional practices that are obviously not properly equipping fully half or more of our young people or shall we immediately undertake the reformation of our entire secondary education in order to position it properly for maximum contribution to our individual and national life?" [7]

— 1983, President Ronald Reagan stated, "Our vocational classrooms are just as important as any other classrooms." [8]

Numbers refer to bibliography items.

The authors of *A Nation at Risk* have built a strong case for reform in education — academic and vocational. The authors recognize the importance of the nation's declining share of world markets, perceived decline in productivity, and the inability of a large percentage of the students in America to compete for jobs in the "Age of Technology." The solutions proposed by the report hinge totally on expansion and improvemnt of "academic" and

"humanities" education. The need to provide meaningful education to *all* young people is ignored. The authors disregard the vast amount of previous study and publications that demonstrate the need for high school graduates to have "saleable skills" obtained through vocational education.

The premises of *A Nation at Risk* are highly palatable to a society seeking to improve the educational system. However, the conclusions and recommendations need to reflect the needs of *all* of society.

A Nation at Risk recognizes the importance of strengthening academic education and the basic skills referred to as the "New Basics." Nearly everyone recognizes the need for all students to possess proficiency in the basic skills. It is unfortunate that the report ignores the need for *skill training* for the 80 percent of all youth enrolled in public schools who will never complete a course of study at a college or university. What about the over 50-60 percent of all secondary students who will never pursue formal education after departing high school? [3]

One of the few statements supporting the need for vocational education in the *Nation at Risk* report is the statement:

> "The high school curriculum should also provide students with programs requiring rigorous effort in subjects that advance students' personal, educational and occupational goals, such as the fine and performing arts and vocational education. These areas complement the new basics, and they should demand the same level of performance as the basics." [1]

The *Nation at Risk* report did address the secondary school curriculum issue with the following statement:

> "Secondary school curricula have been homogenized, diluted, and diffused to the point that they no longer have a central purpose. In effect, we have a cafeteria style curriculum in which the appetizers and desserts can easily be mistaken for the main courses. Students have migrated from vocational and college preparation programs to "general track" courses in large numbers." [1]

A Nation at Risk cites the movement from vocational education and college preparatory "tracks" to "general tracks" as though both had suffered major declines in enrollments. In reality, since 1964, vocational education enrollments have increased nationwide by 20 percent.

Does *A Nation at Risk* address the majority of America's youth? Do the students of America need *more* or *better* academic instruction? Is there, within the American education system, a call for major reforms and a commitment to vocational education?

Currently, 32 percent of the unemployed in America are high school dropouts — they did not survive the system.[3] Research demonstrates that vocational education make education relevant and is a positive deterrent to ever increasing numbers of high school dropouts. Vocational education is the most relevant program for the 80 percent of noncollege-bound students. Vocational education may well be a major part of the solution. It is the skilled workers who apply the new technology of research and produce goods and services that can be marketed competitively in the world marketplace. Vocational education contributes significantly to the supply of trained skilled workers who are so vital to the economic growth and vitality of America.

Competition demands that America must be concerned with preparing people for employment in all businesses — large and small. High quality vocational education training programs are imperative if we are to obtain or maintain a competitive edge in the industrial world marketplace.

By virtue of size, small business depends heavily on vocational education to train their people. Small business is by and large unable to invest venture capital into training if it is to grow and expand. Small businesses (20 or less employees) account for:

— 56% of the private emloyment in America [4]

— 43% of America's Gross National Product [4]

— 85% of all jobs in Colorado [2]

High quality vocational and technical programs, articulated through secondary and post-secondary levels, does provide a vital human resource to meet the needs of the business and industry and to address the nation's risk.

The vocational education system in America is not without problems and can and must be improved. Although a high percentage of the high school graduates (78 percent) have completed at least one vocational course, only 29 percent of the high school graduates have completed a concentration of four or more vocational courses. Most would agree that an individual student needs to be enrolled in a concentration of vocational courses that constitutes a program if they are to be employable upon graduation.

If academic requirements for high school graduation are broadly expanded, fewer and fewer vocational courses, which are electives, will be available. Even the current numbers of students concentrating on vocational education will decline. If America is to prepare the "Forgotten Majority" to be employed in the 65 percent of new and replacement jobs that require vocational training, a larger percentage of students must have the opportunity to enroll in and complete vocational training programs. To meet this challenge, America must maintain an educational system which will fulfill the needs of *all* people. *A Nation at Risk* falls short of this objective. If followed to its logical conclusion, *A Nation At Risk* would abandon the largest portion of this nation's human resources and would focus only on the elite who ultimately receive a baccalaureate degree.

Will this nation revert to a philosophy that we must educate only a few, or will we proceed on the premise that all people must have access to, benefit from, and be served by public education? Does the groundwork for *A Nation at Risk* call for reform of only academic education or for the development of a "full service" public education system? The future of this nation depends on our response.

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